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Tim Allender, *Learning Femininity in Colonial India, 1820–1932*. United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2016, 333 pages, £75. ISBN: 978-0-7190-8579-6.

Tim Allender's *Learning Femininity in Colonial India* identifies key phases of development in women's education from 1820-1932. Focusing on state-sponsored learning spaces for women and girls, the book closely examines the trajectories of women educators and learners. Within the settings of local schools and medical training facilities, Allender shows how the colonial state's notions of Western femininity were used to determine who educates, who is educated and the nature of educational provision in colonial India. As such, this rich examination of state-sponsored education sets out the complexity of knowledge transfers taking place between Great Britain and India at the time, and the essential networks that served to facilitate them. In so doing, Allender addresses the interactions between race, class and gender in the colonial context, which he importantly recognises do not form distinct realms of experience, but exist in relation to one another.

The book begins with a theoretically sophisticated introduction. It positions the study within the transnational histories of imperial connectivity, gender and education. It is followed by nine stimulating and rewarding chapters that form the core of the book. Chapter one unpacks the nature of early imperial interactions in order to show how official European mentalities and stereotypes of Eastern femininity emerged. The distinction between feminism and femininity is important here as the author shows how interactions between European and Indian women were not inspired by feminist agency. Rather, the preservation of the female body and what it meant to be a woman informed cross-cultural exchange. Central to the study, therefore, is the racial grammar of Western perspectives about femininity, Indian women's supposed 'deficits', and the need for educated females. This is further elaborated on in chapter two which charts a shift within official attitudes from the 1840s onwards when ideas about educating women in India began to focus on favouring Eurasian women. The racial agenda was clear: Britain's civilising influence had to be upheld by its Eurasian daughters.

The issue of teacher training and the colonial state's reliance on the mission network are discussed in chapter 4. From the mid 1870s, the mission was viewed as a depository for female education directives. For this reader, chapters 5 and 6 on colonial medicine are especially noteworthy. Here, the institutionalisation of medical training is used to understand the evolving image of the western feminine ideal. It is within these chapters that interactions with disadvantaged Indian women and girls are explored. Chapter 8, on 'Better Mothers' is particularly illuminating given its emphasis on the nationalist movement and the emerging receptiveness of European females to Indian cultural spaces.

Ultimately, this is an impressive and textured monograph that draws on archival material from Britain, South Asia, North America, Ireland and Australia. It illustrates how notions of femininity and gender stereotypes were intimately imbricated with developments in education, and should certainly be read alongside the work of Gail Minault (*Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*) and Sita Anantha Raman (*Getting Girls to School: Social Reform in Tamil Districts, 1870-1930*).

In sum, *Learning Femininity in Colonial India* is a welcome and important contribution to the existing literature. Allender exposes the gradated and oblique forms of imperial exchange in a wide range of, mostly underexplored, imperial sites. Most significantly, this book expertly demonstrates how this history of gender and women's education is not a separate strand, but an integral element within the field of imperial studies. It will be of interest to a range of audiences including students and researchers of gender, empire and education.